

NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-9975  
RONALD J. DUNLAVEY

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ANGOLA: CASTRO ON THE CUBAN ROLE

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE CUBAN ROLE IN THE ANGOLA FIGHTING:

VOICE:

PRIME MINISTER FIDEL CASTRO HAS FINALLY MADE IT PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. HE ADMITTED THURSDAY FOR THE FIRST TIME---AT A NEWS CONFERENCE IN HAVANA---THAT CUBAN TROOPS ARE IN ANGOLA. THE PRESENCE OF THOSE TROOPS---MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND OF THEM---HAS BEEN COMMON KNOWLEDGE FOR MONTHS. BUT IT WAS ONLY LAST WEEK THAT ANY CUBAN OFFICIAL WOULD CONCEDE THIS---AND THURSDAY'S ADMISSION WAS THE FIRST BY THE CUBAN LEADER HIMSELF.

THE TIMING WAS INTERESTING; THERE MIGHT EVEN BE THOSE WHO WOULD WONDER IF PRIME MINISTER CASTRO WASN'T IMPELLED BY A SENSE OF PRIDE IN THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS TROOPS. FOR THE LATEST NEWS FROM ANGOLA INDICATES THAT THE REPORTED GAINS MADE BY THE POPULAA MOVEMENT IN THE NORTHERN SECTOR ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY DUE TO THE EFFORTS OF CUBAN TROOPS. CUBANS ARE SAID TO BE LEADING THE POPULAR MOVEMENT'S ATTACK TOWARD THE BORDER OF ZAIRE. AND THE OFFICIAL ZAIRE NEWS AGENCY HAS ACCUSED THE CUBANS OF FIRING ROCKETS INTO A TOWN IN ZAIRE AND OF BLOWING UP THE BRIDGES BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ANGOLA. CUBAN ARTILLERY IS SAID TO BE PLAYING A DECISIVE ROLE. CUBAN TROOPS ARE ALSO SAID TO BE ACTIVE ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT. PRIME MINISTER CASTRO'S CLAIM THAT THE MPLA IS INFILCTING "CATASTROPHIC CASUALTIES" IS PROBABLY AN INFLATED ONE---BUT TO THE EXTENT THAT CASUALTIES ARE BEING INFILCTED, CUBANS CAN CERTAINLY TAKE CREDIT.

MR. CASTRO REPEATED THE FAMILIAR ARGUMENT FOR CUBAN INTERVENTION---THAT IT IS INTENDED TO COUNTER THE INTERVENTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES AGAINST THE MPLA. HE DID NOT MAKE ANY REFERENCE TO THE SUGGESTION MADE WEDNESDAY BY UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER. MR. KISSINGER HAD PROPOSED A PHASED WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS, WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS WITHDRAWING FIRST. AFTER AN AGREED BRIEF INTERVAL, OTHER FOREIGN TROOPS WOULD WITHDRAW, CLEARING THE WAY FOR A CEASEFIRE AND NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE ANGOLANS. MR. CASTRO GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE WOULD ENDORSE SUCH A PLAN, AND THIS OF COURSE IS BOUND TO RAISE THE QUESTION WHETHER HE IS NOT MORE INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING THE CUBAN PRESENCE THAN IN ELIMINATING THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESENCE. IN FACT, HE SAID THAT THE CUBAN TROOPS WILL REMAIN AS LONG AS THEY ARE NEEDED----WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS JUSTIFYING AN INDEFINITE STAY.

THE WHOLE TONE---AS WELL AS THE WORDS---OF MR. CASTRO'S STATEMENTS THURSDAY WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE A GROWING CONFIDENCE, NOT TO SAY BOLDNESS, ABOUT THE CUBAN ROLE IN ANGOLA, WHICH OF COURSE IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THAT OF THE SOVIET UNION. BUT IT IS AN ATTITUDE WHICH IS LIKELY TO INCREASE UNEASINESS AMONG THE AFRICAN STATES---UNEASINESS EXPRESSED AT LAST WEEK'S MEETING AT ADDIS ABABA ---ABOUT THE LONG-RANGE IMPLICATIONS OF THE MASSIVE INTERVENTION SPONSORED BY MOSCOW AND HAVANA.